



Governance Structure

A Grass Roots Approach

By Tim Burton and Edward Sypinski

The State of Montana's Homeland Strategic Plan calls for the establishment of a Montana-wide, interoperable communications public safety system.

The lack of interoperable voice and data communications continues to represent a significant challenge for public safety responders. After decades of experience with this issue, it is clear to first responders and other emergency organizations that public safety communications and interoperability cannot be solved by any one entity. It requires a partnership among local, state, tribal and federal public safety organizations and industry.

The State of Montana's Homeland Strategic Plan calls for the establishment of a Montana-wide, interoperable communications public safety system. The State Interoperability Executive Council (SIEC) was named as executive policy agent in June of 2004 and defined interoperable communications as the ability of public safety emergency responders from local, tribal, state and federal agencies to communicate seamlessly, without any special effort.

The State of Montana and federal and local partners are committed to develop a system of systems that is compatible, meets established standards, and will provide interoperable radio communications statewide. The governance structure needs to be built from the bottom up with an emphasis on local control. Our goal is to establish a continuous funding mechanism for on-going maintenance, operations and expansion.

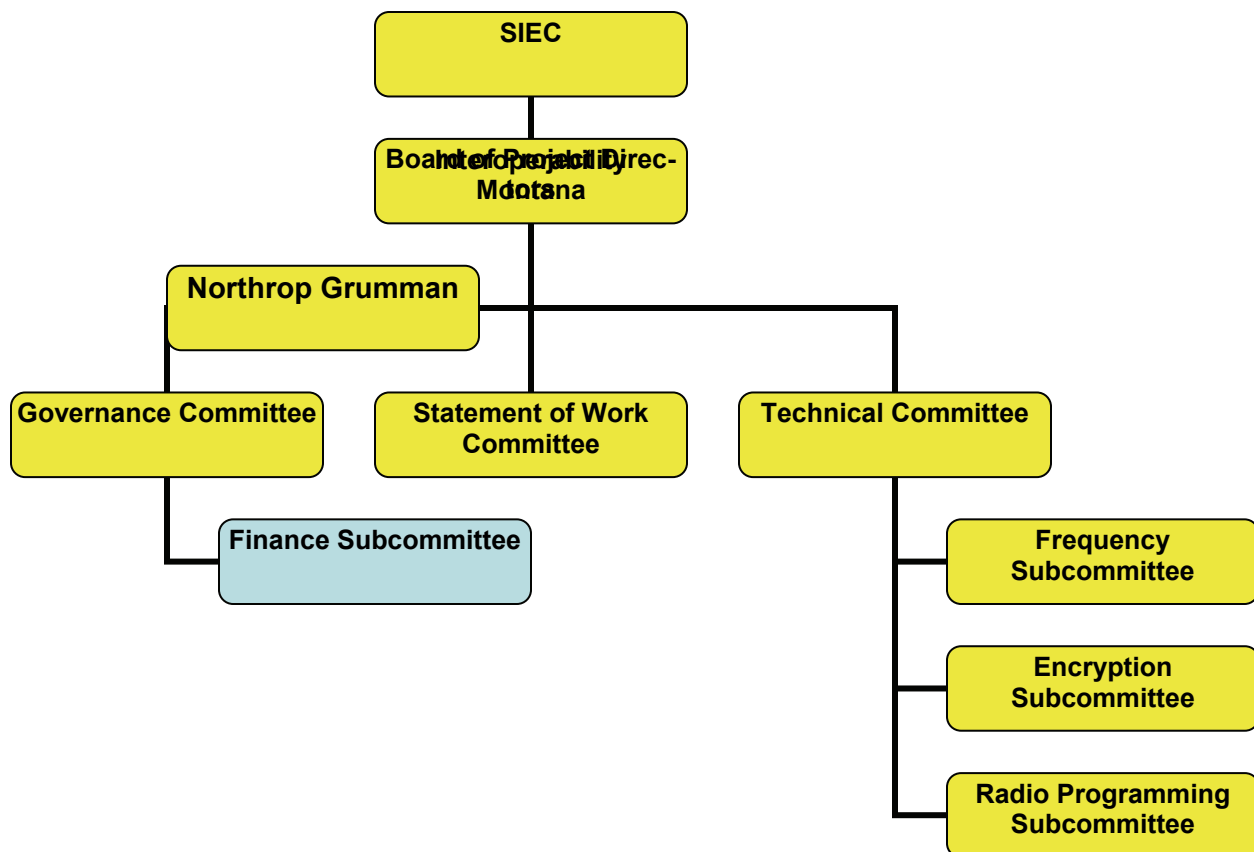
Organizational Process

The organizational process for conducting the project includes:

- Policy direction from the Statewide Interoperability Executive Council (SIEC)
- Project oversight and deployment with leadership from the Interoperable Montana Project Directors (IMPD), in cooperative agreement between the nine regional consortia and the State of Montana;
- A joint project team, consisting of technical and admin-

istrative staff from participating partners, to manage all phases of the project;

- Project technical direction from the Interoperable Montana Technical Committee (IMTC), which advises the project directors in matters of project scope and technical issues.
- The IMTC is a partnership of IMPD members, State of Montana agencies and Federal user groups which utilize wireless communications in Montana;
- Professional project management of all phases contracted through Northrop Grumman Corporation off the State of Montana's MIS contract;
- Governance guidance and development through a partnership of user groups and administrative agencies forming the Interoperability Montana Governance Committee (IMGC).

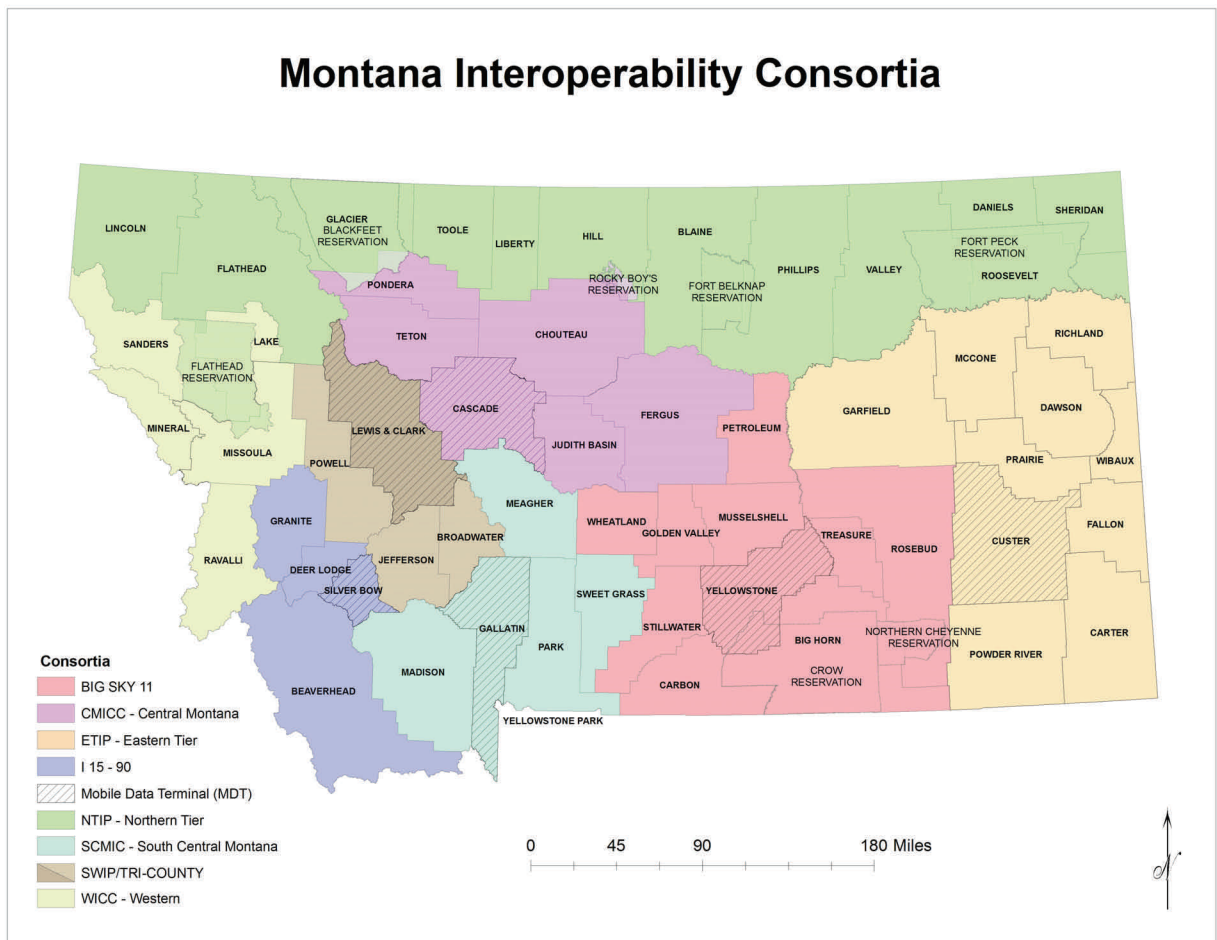


The Statewide Interoperability Executive Council (SIEC)

The SIEC is comprised of local, tribal, state, federal, and other public service agency representatives. Its purpose is to provide policy-level direction for matters related to planning, designing and implementing guidelines, best practices, and standard approaches to solve Montana's public safety communications interoperability problems and to leverage any opportunity in support of a statewide system, including seeking federal funding, or other funding, for statewide interoperability. Sharing of a common radio infrastructure will eliminate duplications of capital investment projects reducing total radio communications cost for each participating agency.

To that end it shall:

- Establish a joint approach to wireless interoperability among public safety entities within Montana;
- Exercise authority for strategic decision-making with regard to Montana's public safety communications by:
 - Researching and evaluating best practices;
 - Developing recommendations for statewide standards;
 - Fostering coordination and cooperation among agencies;
 - Making recommendations to provide statewide assistance;
 - Acting as an information clearinghouse;
 - Serving as a policy point of contact for local; regional, and national interoperability matters;
 - Developing recommendations for legislation that may be required to further promote interoperability;
- Considering other policy issues related to solving Montana's public safety communications interoperability problems; and
- Exploring opportunities for inter-agency and regional systems and developing methods for inter-agency cooperation.



Consortia and Project Directors

The IM Project is a partnership of local, tribal, state and federal response agencies committed to improving and expanding interoperable communications throughout Montana. The partners are divided into three main categories: 1) Regional Consortia (representing local and tribal interests); 2) State of Montana Agencies (representing all levels of state radio users); 3) Federal and Private Partnerships. These partners have formed nine consortia to deploy the IM Project Montana. Consortium members have elected a project director to represent them on the Interoperability Montana Project Directors (IMPD).

The IMPD represents leaders from each consortium and serves as the operational governing board for the IM Project. The IMPD is a dynamic, cohesive group dedicated to the deployment of statewide interoperability for public safety responders. The IMPD provides project definition and oversight, the directors wholly represent the local communications needs of their communities and work together to collaboratively build a shared system designed to improve the safety of their residents and responders who serve them. This grass-roots partnership of local, tribal, and state government agencies is dedicated to a strategic deployment of Project 25, digital, secure voice and data communications across the state.

Northrop Grumman Corporation has been selected by the IMPD to provide Centralized Project Management (CPM). Use of CPM provides a cost-effective, coordinated approach to implementing Interoperability Montana. Part of the Statement of Work (SOW) for the CPM is to assist the IMPD and State of Montana to produce a detailed Montana Communications Plan.

As part of the IM Project, each of these consortia have agreed to work together and advance the development of interoperable communications infrastructure according to the priorities and funding established by the IMPD. Communications needs not addressed by the IMPD may be developed by the consortia, or individual agencies, as their own priorities and funding allow.

Interoperability Montana Governance Committee (IMGC)

The IM Governance Committee works under the guidance and direction of the IM Project Directors and is charged with defining strategies and developing structures that address short and long term governance and maintenance solutions for the IM Project. The governance structure will establish from the ground up a structure that will ensure a place at the table for all relevant agencies and users, which will formalize and ensure equality in the decision-making (e.g. all members have an equal vote as defined by their level of participation). This structure should be a vehicle through which agencies, local responders and users participating in the Interoperability Montana plan for, implement and manage an integrated interoperable radio system statewide.

The IMGC is made of representatives from the IMPD, Public Safety Services Bureau, the Governor's Office and other agencies. Thanks to a recent \$50,000 grant from the National Governor's Association, the IMGC is teaming up with Montana State University's Local Government Center to develop master strategies for approaching long-term governance and maintenance issues.

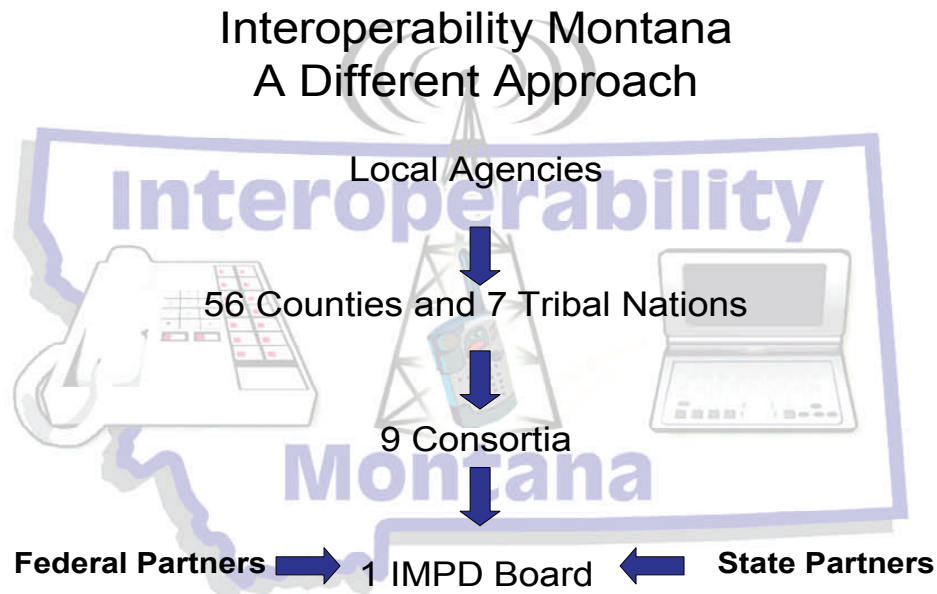
Interoperability Montana Technical Committee (IMTC)

Due to the highly technical nature of radio interoperability communications, the IMTC was formed to make recommendations to the IMPD on technical issues related to the design, implementation and operation of the IM Project.

The IM Technical Committee also works under the guidance and direction of the IM Project Directors and is tasked with design and development of the IM system. The IM system is designed under guidelines provided by the Senior Advisory Committee (SAC):

- All consortia see improvement.
- Sites should fill in dead spots that will be located along the backbone once completed.
- Trunk sites should cover major transportation arteries or population centers.
- Sites should have a significant impact on multiple consortia and/or multi-jurisdictions.
- The IM should address projects that exceed scope and ability of local/tribal funding.

The IMTC serves an important role in evaluating technology, determining technical specifications for equipment and sites, assessing communications sites, identifying frequencies, ensuring compliance with P25 standards, and addressing encryption and bandwidth issues. The IMTC formulated technical criteria that have been used to prepare a prioritized list of infrastructure projects, which the IMPD has adopted.



The Governance Committee is committed to creating a viable and sustainable structure for governance of a system of systems built from the grass roots with local control. The above graph represents our approach. We are now in the process of creating the interlocal agreements that will be considered by the consortia and the binding memorandum of understanding that creates the IMPD Board with representation from nine consortia, three state agencies and other yet-to-be-determined representatives.

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